

THE SWEETER SIDE OF LIFE

Ko tv

WINTER 2026

JEEP SHADOW OPS
SAMSUNG VISION AI @CES
YOUR TV HAS A CONSCIOUS
DODGE CHARGER SCAT PACK
GOUGH NOW OPTIONABLE: XBOX ALLY

DJLC

LAURA CAVENDER

WINTER FLIX
MERCY
CRIME101
DEAD MAN'S WIRE

**BILL
SKARSGÅRD** **DACRE
MONTGOMERY** **CARY
ELWES**

MYHA'LA **WITH
COLMAN
DOMINGO** **AND
AL
PACINO**

His revolution was televised

FROM LEGENDARY DIRECTOR GUS VAN SANT
DEAD MAN'S WIRE

BASED ON THE TRUE STORY THAT HELD A NATION HOSTAGE

WRITTEN BY **AUSTIN KOLODNEY** DIRECTED BY **GUS VAN SANT**

IN SELECT THEATRES JANUARY 9
EVERYWHERE JANUARY 16

R LANGUAGE
THROUGHOUT

ROW K

The image shows a close-up of a person's hand holding a white tablet. On the tablet is the cover of 'Kandy' magazine, which features a blonde woman (Tiffany Selby) in a blue and white checkered bikini, holding a large rainbow lollipop. The woman is wearing colorful beaded necklaces and a matching bracelet. The magazine title 'Kandy' is in a stylized purple font at the top, and 'TIFFANY SELBY' is written in colorful block letters at the bottom left of the cover. In the top left corner of the overall image, the 'Kandy' logo is displayed in a white, cursive font with a registered trademark symbol. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

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WHAT KIND OF MAN READS KANDY?

He doesn't just follow trends, he seeds them. He's curious about the new sport dominating the global scene, the luxury watch so elegantly engineered it sparks a conversation, the deep-dive gadget that makes the rest of his gear feel like yesterday's news.

He knows style is more than the fabric, it's the vibe; he knows fitness is more than reps, it's discipline; he knows entertainment is more than screens, it's moments. He's the man who finishes a red-eye flight, checks his watch in the lounge, and quietly smiles at the next level he knows he's living. He's sharp, not showy, and he's always chasing what's next. He reads KANDY because he moves fast: the gym, the boardroom, the trip to Bali. He's in pursuit of more: more style, more travel, more flavor in life. Whether he's planning the next adventure, polishing his look before the meeting, or catching the game that changes his weekend - KANDY is in his feed. For the man who's always moving, always upgrading, always ahead - KANDY. If that's you, you're the KANDY man.



Kandy

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WINTER SLUMBER, BRRR

Hello KANDY Zinio Reader,

Winter has arrived in the northern hemisphere. And like our furry friends, the Bears, we have been hibernating. We finally awoke from our slumber to serve up a new issue of Kandy for you to feast upon.

First up is cover model DL LC. Like the bear who digs deep into his stash for his winter nourishment, we dug deep into our archives for our Zinio readers. DJ LC's feature beckons us back to our third issue. At the time, Laura was a globetrotting DJ. Photographed on an estate in Beverly Hills, which no longer exists, LC's photo shoot was dropping sexy beats from day into night.

Our discovery of LC's feature in issue 3 enlightened us to two other gems, 15 First Date Pointers from Playboy Playmate Tailor James, and our KANDY Girl of the Month, Actress Erika Othen. If you are a single guy, Tailor's tips are alone worth the price of purchasing this issue. For proof, here is a snippet of her tips: *"There's nothing worse than a guy who constantly talks about himself. We really don't need to hear about what you shot on the golf course, the type of car(s) you drive, the amount of money you made last quarter..."* Meanwhile, when we featured Erika, she was making her rounds through reality television. *"As far as how my experience went on True Beauty, it was definitely an interesting time for me."* Since her feature, she has gone on to mainstream television and films. Download the issue and check out her IMDb credits, which we share inside.

Outside the ladies of KANDY are tech, entertainment, and auto features. You may recall that in our Fall Issue, we focused heavily on Sports. Now, it's time for man's other interests. We give the 2026 Dodge Charger Scat Pack and 2026 Jeep Gladiator Shadow Ops the KANDY treatment. They are a must-read.

We take a peek at CES 2026, which just concluded. We take a deep dive into Samsung's booth this year. Samsung is all-in on AI. Can we say some of it scares us big-time? It does.

Finally, we spotlight three films on our Watch List: Mercy, Crime 101, and Dead Man's Wire. One looks at our future (or the present if you live in the UK, Australia, and the EU). One is set in present-day America, and the other looks back in time at a 1970's real-life event. Whatever your preference for film genres, all three are worthy of your time.

Enjoy our Winter Slumber, and we'll be back next month with an Olympics Preview and a Valentine's theme cover.

Ron Kuchler

Editor in Chief

PROVE YOUR INNOCENCE TO AN AI JUDGE
OR FACE EXECUTION

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Amazon MGM Studios
Crime 100 Dean Rogers, Merrick Morton
Mercy - Justin Lubin

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WINTER ISSUE 2026



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WHO CAN YOU TRUST WHEN IT'S ALL ON THE LINE?

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FIRST DATE POINTERS

By: **Taylor James**

Photo by

Vasko Photography www.thepphoto.ca

[Editor's Note: Before Ai, men read KANDY for insight into the female mind. Why? We went straight to the source, the women. And there was no better source than Playboy Playmates who would appear in KANDY Magazine. Here is one of our favorite articles from back then. Playboy Playmate Taylor James gave us her list of first date tips for men. Follow them or live forever in the repetitiveness of First Date hell.]

First dates have been a topic of intense inquiry for thousands of years, posing many scholarly minds bafflement and frustration in their quest for the perfect formula that would garner a successful courtship. This formula, however, faces the age-old problem of improbability; First dates are never one in the same. They are unpredictable.



A number of factors can be at play, changing the course of the date without warning, sending even the most prepared suitor into a black hole of uncertainty. Understanding this, I have only one option for all of you brave men preparing to embark on what could be the beginning of the rest of your life... or the end, depending on the severity of your manners.

Let's start at the beginning. If you are about to go on a first date, you're already one up from the other guys. She's obviously interested enough to give you a chance, so enhance that interest with your exceptional charm and charisma. If you lack either of these, here's a list of traits you can use to disguise yourself as a charming and charismatic gentleman:

1. Be early. If you're meeting your date at, let's go with the most traditional, a restaurant, make sure that if you arrange to meet at 7, you're there at 6:45. Women do not enjoy showing up for a dinner and having to wait for their companion. It makes them feel anxious and embarrassed; all they think of is whether or not you stood them up. Also, there's a high probability that if you are, in fact, late. Your prospective date may end up taking advantage of the happy hour martinis and giving a happy ending to the cute bartender she had to talk to in your absence.

2. Having said this, if you are picking up your date, you should not be early. We hate being rushed when we're getting ready, and we'll only be stressed out more and will most likely resent you for the rest of the evening. Forget about a goodbye kiss. You won't even get a high five. But don't be late either. 7 means 7.

3. Trim your nose hairs. Get rid of that Bert unbrow. Have a shower. Wear deodorant. Unless you are Matthew McConaughey, you cannot pull off the eau de naturel. Cut your nails, check for eye crust, change your underwear, shave your neck (at least), tidy your hair, and brush your teeth.

4. When you're at the table, ask questions. There's nothing worse than a guy who constantly talks about himself. We really don't need to hear about what you shot on the golf course, the type of car(s) you drive, the amount of money you made last quarter, how you could've been a pro quarterback but you got injured in college, how your friends' brother's wife's cousin is friends with Charlie Sheen, how you were voted most likely to succeed in high school...blah blah blah. Listen to what your date has to say, and respond intelligently, steering your words back in her direction.

5. Don't keep looking around, especially at other women. Look at your date, pay attention to what she's saying unless your date is fucking annoying as hell ("I like, love shopping and stuff, and like, I really think Kim Kardashian, is like, totally not hot, and like...") then you have a clear go ahead to excuse yourself to the little boys room and exit the building.

6. By saying keep asking her questions, this does not mean "how many guys have you slept with?", "how often do you pleasure yourself?", "Do you like me so far?", "What's your bra size, because your bust is very similar to my ex's, and she was a 34 C." etc. That's a sure bet for not getting a second date, or even finishing the first.

7. Do not get drunk. I repeat, do not get drunk.

8. Don't "forget your wallet". And make sure you pay, even if your date offers to split the bill. Nine times out of ten, she's just being polite and would most graciously accept your generosity. However, if she is upset by this notion and wants to split the bill, and she says she is a strong advocate for women's equal rights (which I have no problem with), she's quite possibly a neo feminist. You don't want to pursue a relationship with what may become the leader of a dyke march (unless you are a lesbian which I have no problem with) or a lesbian disguised as a man (which is kind of weird, however I still have no problem with this) or man disguised as a lesbian (which is kind of creepy and I must say I am on the fence about this one) and if you like hairy armpits... and legs... and....

9. Do not consume garlic at any point in the day leading up to the date, or during. Think about it. No matter how charming you are, if she catches a whiff of your shop teacher's breath, that's all she's going to remember.

10. Do not flatulate. Don't even think you can slip them out without her noticing. She'll notice and blaming it on the waitress won't help. Excuse yourself to the restroom and let them loose.

11. Definitely do not talk about your views on the upcoming election, or anything remotely political for that matter. This will most always open a can of worms you'll most certainly wish had stayed sealed tight. This goes for religion, too. Saying you're a firm advocate for the teachings of the Bible and don't understand why the rest of the simpletons on this planet can't grasp the only truth man has ever known and embrace Jesus or burn in eternal damnation is not suggestive... unless you met at the church picnic. But even then....

12. Put the phone away. Being distracted by your phone does not make you appear more important and appealing. In fact, it will make you seem arrogant and uninterested, leading to the demise of any reprisal meetings with your date.

13. Do not talk negatively about her friends. Even if she is. Women may occasionally

do this, then before you know it, they're best friends again and going to get their nails done. You don't want her to feel like you disprove of her friendships, even though she was talking shit in the first place. Women are difficult like this, so it's best just to listen, say as little as possible, and be understanding. Also, don't defend her friends because this will lead you down a whole other road of problems, one road a man will surely walk down alone.

14. Going in for the kiss. This is a difficult one. You'll have to gauge how the evening went. Reflect on past conversations, judging appropriately if she seemed to like you. But don't be delusional. Again, do not ask if she liked you. Also, do not ask if you can kiss her. Just do it. No tongue! And most importantly, contrary to popular belief, don't whip it out. Keep it in your pants. This means no sex on the first date unless you don't intend to pursue a healthy relationship. Also, having sex with someone else after the date is over is probably not advisable either.

15. Lastly, if your date goes smoothly, and you get that fabled good-night kiss, do not wait to call her. Call the next day, hopefully at a time when you get her voicemail, and leave a message telling her what a nice time you had and that you look forward to getting together with her again soon. Do not text this. Also, do not leave a message stat-

ing that you can't stop thinking about how you wanted to get it on with her all night, and you masturbated to this image with an ankle sock. Even if this is true, don't even tell your friends. If you don't have any friends, you now know why.

If she doesn't call you back, do not keep calling her. Take it as a sign to move on.

Well, that's the basic first date point sheet. Good luck with your future love life and remember: drink lots of pineapple juice.





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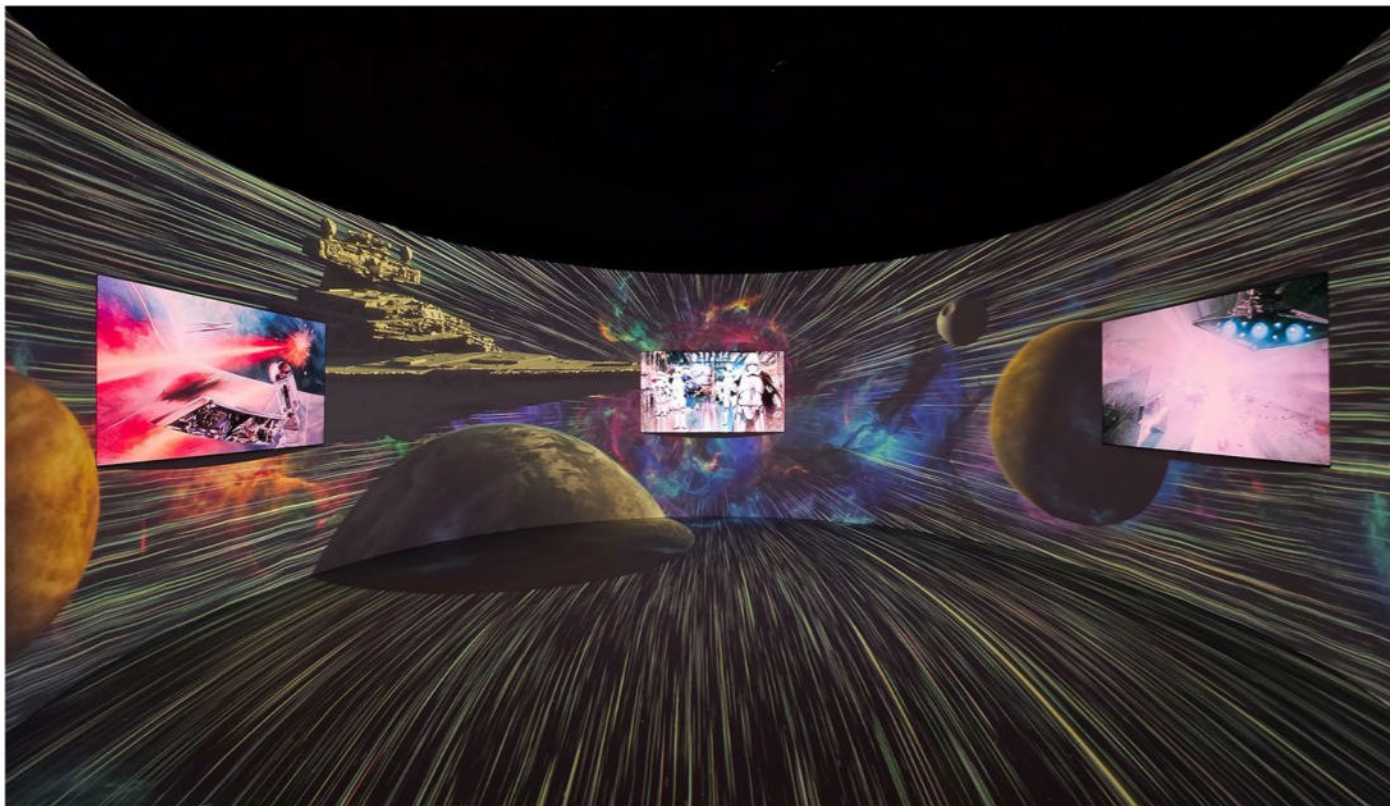
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SAMSUNG AT CES 2026

LIVING WITH THE MACHINE THAT KNOWS YOU



Introduction

CES has always been about spectacle. Bigger screens, thinner devices, faster chips... technology as adrenaline rush. But at CES 2026, Samsung arrived with something more unsettling, and ultimately more ambitious: a vision of technology that does not merely respond but accompanies.

Under the banner “*Companion to AI Living*,” Samsung reframed artificial intelligence not as a feature set or a buzzword, but as an operating philosophy - one that spans not only entertainment but home, health, and care. This was not an announcement of isolated products. It was a declaration that AI is no longer a layer added to devices; it is the connective tissue binding them together.

Samsung’s CES presence made one thing clear: the company is no longer asking what devices can do. It is asking how technology should behave when it becomes ambient, anticipatory, and deeply personal.

The Television Grows a Conscious

For two decades, Samsung has dominated the global television market by refining the fundamentals: brightness, contrast, scale. At CES 2026, the company suggested that picture quality alone is no longer the endpoint. The modern TV, Samsung argues, must become perceptive.

At the center of this evolution is **Vision AI Companion (VAC)**, a platform embedded across nearly Samsung's entire 2026 TV lineup. **VAC** transforms the television from a passive display into an active participant - one that understands what you are watching, why you are watching it, and what you might want next. The TV becomes conversational, responsive to verbal cues, and capable of surfacing contextual information without demanding attention.

This is not AI as novelty. It is AI as presence. Watching a soccer match, the TV automatically optimizes sound and picture to stadium intensity. Watching a cooking show, it can identify a dish, suggest recipes, and send them directly to kitchen appliances. Entertainment now bleeds seamlessly into lifestyle.

Samsung's gamble is subtle but profound: the television is no longer the center of the living room because it is large, it is central because it interprets.



The 130-Inch Statement Piece

If Vision AI Companion represents Samsung's philosophical ambition, the **130-inch Micro RGB TV** represents its unapologetic bravado.

Unveiled as the world's first display of its kind, the Micro RGB is not merely big, it is architectural. Samsung has leaned fully into the idea of television as spatial object, designing the screen to resemble a floating window rather than a slab of technology. The Timeless Frame minimizes distraction, allowing image and sound to merge into a singular visual experience that reshapes the room itself.

Technologically, the display is equally audacious. Each microscopic red, green, and blue diode operates independently, generating color in its purest and most precise form. With full BT.2020 color coverage, glare-free technology, and AI-driven tone mapping, the Micro RGB achieves a level of visual realism that verges on disorientation. This is not a television designed to recede quietly into its surroundings; it is a display that demands attention on its own terms.

The presence of Vision AI Companion on a display of this magnitude raises the stakes. When AI guidance, recommendations, and environmental awareness meet a screen this immersive, the result is no longer "watching." It is inhabiting.





Entertainment as Ecosystem

Samsung's AI vision extends far beyond screens. The company is positioning entertainment as a distributed experience that flows across devices, rooms, and moments.

New additions such as **The Freestyle+ projector**, powered by **Vision AI Companion**, challenge long-standing assumptions about where and how premium viewing belongs. Capable of projecting onto walls, ceilings, and irregular surfaces, **The Freestyle+** prioritizes flexibility and context over rigid visual perfection. **The Movingstyle**, a mobile display designed for seamless relocation throughout the home, extends this philosophy further, positioning content as something that adapts to human movement rather than requiring users to adapt themselves.

Audio receives equal attention. Samsung's continued dominance in soundbars is reinforced by the introduction of **Music Studio 5 and 7**, WiFi speakers designed as aesthetic objects as much as sonic instruments. Designed by Erwan Bouroullec, they reflect Samsung's growing confidence in merging industrial design with experiential technology.

With **Eclipsa Audio**, Samsung introduces spatial sound as a default expectation rather than a premium add-on, reinforcing the idea that immersion should be standardized, not gated.

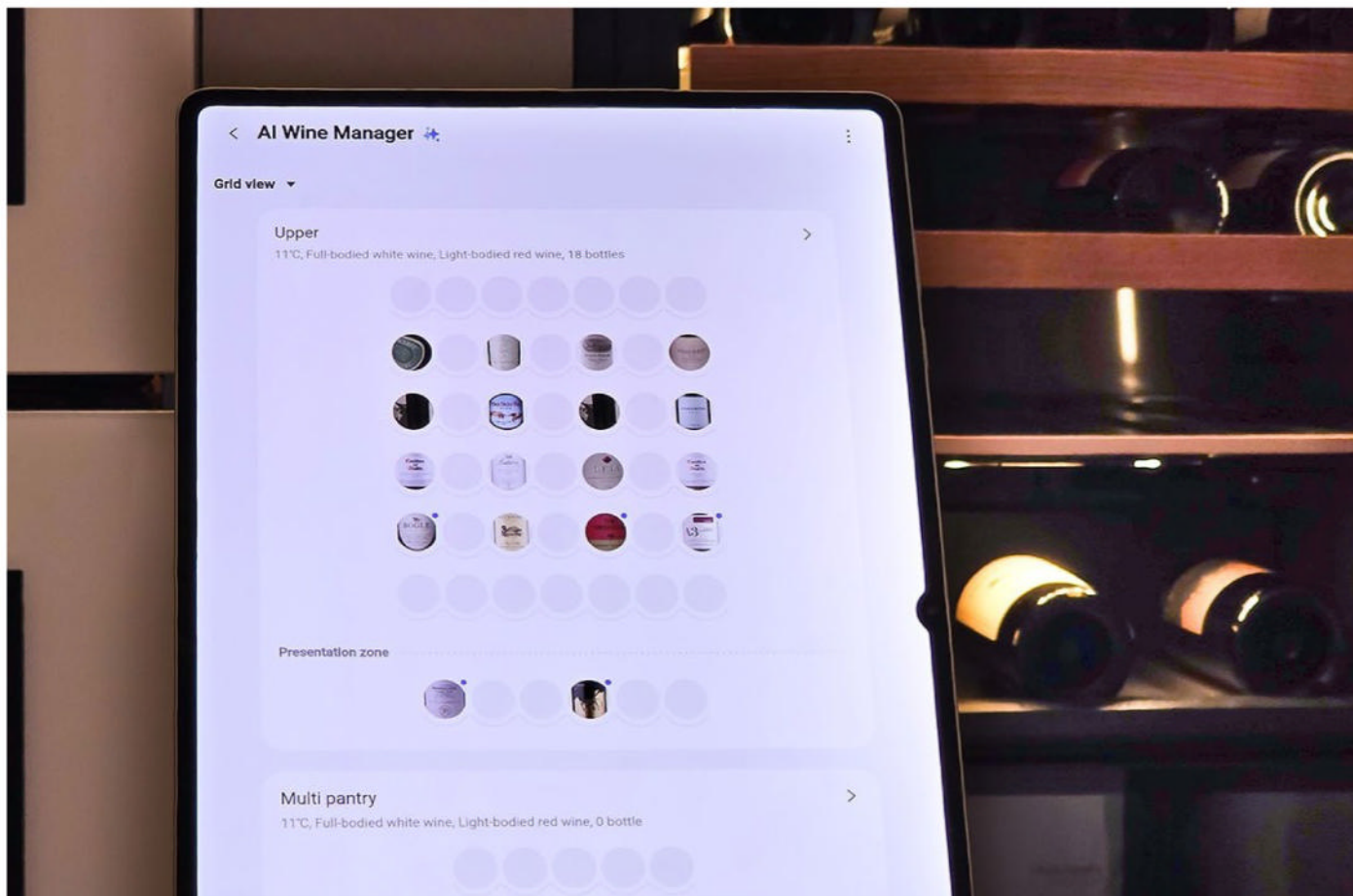
The Smart Home That Thinks Ahead

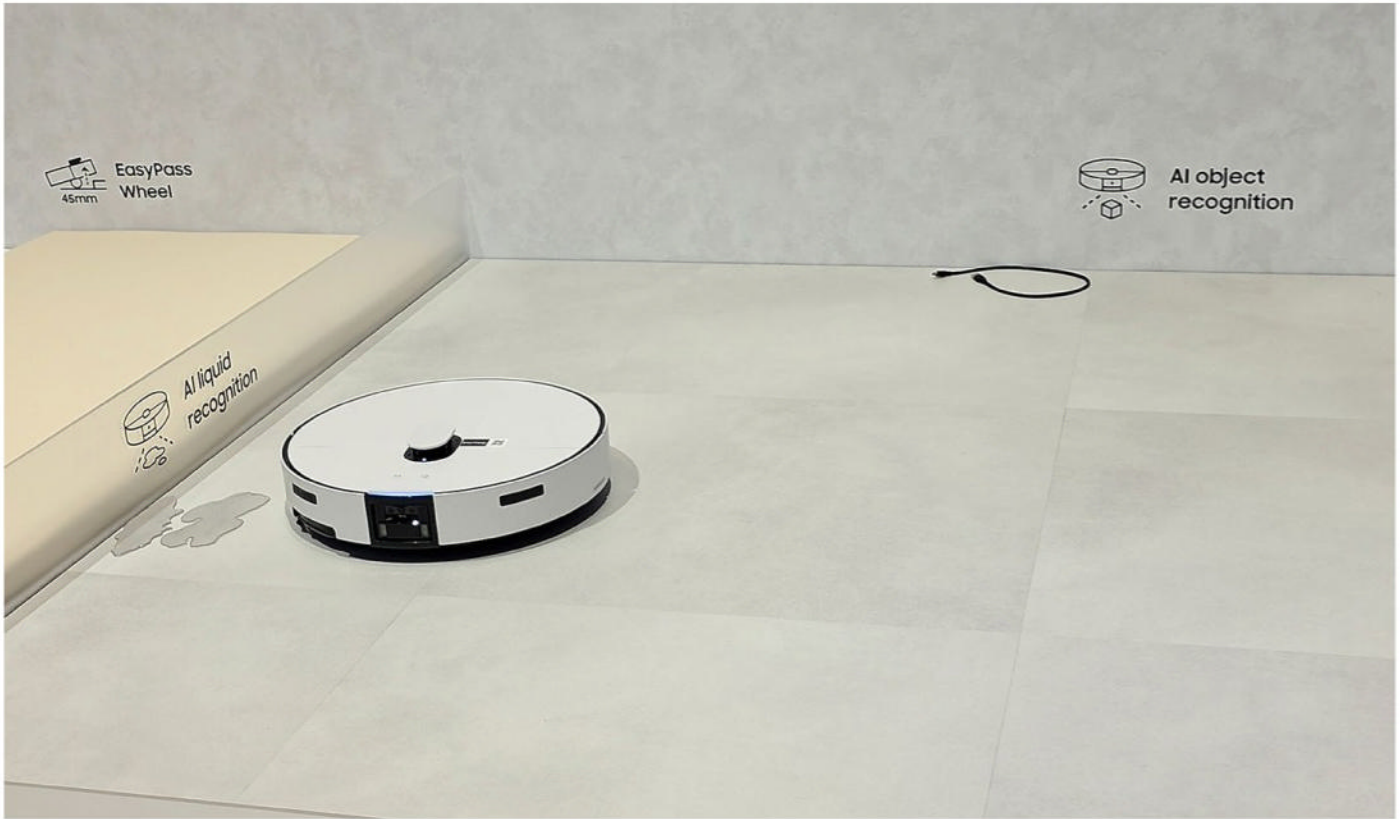
Samsung's **Home Companion** vision reframes smart appliances as guides rather than tools. The most striking example is the evolution of the **Family Hub refrigerator**, now upgraded with AI Vision built on Google Gemini.

AI Vision tracks fridge items as they enter and leave, suggests meals based on available ingredients, and reduces decision fatigue through features like *What's for Today?* and *Video to Recipe*. Cooking becomes assisted, streamlined, and increasingly intuitive.

Laundry, traditionally a pain point, becomes automated with the **Bespoke AI Laundry Combo**, eliminating load transfers and optimizing cycles.

Samsung's message is consistent: AI should remove friction, not introduce complexity.





Robots, But Make Them Responsible

Samsung's AI ambitions could easily veer into dystopia. Instead, the company emphasizes practicality and accountability.

The **Bespoke AI Jet Bot Steam Ultra** exemplifies this balance. Powered by advanced sensors and a Qualcomm processor, the robot vacuum identifies liquids, including transparent spills and adapts its behavior accordingly. Its camera doubles as a home monitoring system, capable of notifying users of pets, activity, or irregular conditions during their absence.

Importantly, Samsung frames this not as surveillance, but as awareness - an extension of care rather than control. Enhanced conversational Bixby integration allows users to speak naturally, reinforcing the idea that AI should conform to human behavior, not the reverse.

From Smart Living to Proactive Care

Perhaps the most consequential aspect of Samsung CES 2026 lies in its **Care Companion** vision. Here, AI shifts from convenience to responsibility.

By integrating data across phones, wearables, appliances, and home systems, Samsung aims to transition health care from reactive intervention to proactive prevention. Wearables like Galaxy Watch and Galaxy Ring monitor sleep, movement, and vital patterns, coordinating with connected home systems to optimize rest environments automatically.

Samsung's research into early dementia detection underscores the seriousness of this ambition. By analyzing speech patterns, gait, typing behavior, and daily routines, AI systems may identify cognitive decline before symptoms become irreversible. Alerts are designed to support caregivers and providers, not replace them, with data shared securely through platforms such as Xhealth.

Even pets enter the equation. **SmartThings Pet Care** uses AI image analysis to identify potential health issues in animals, extending the care ecosystem beyond humans.



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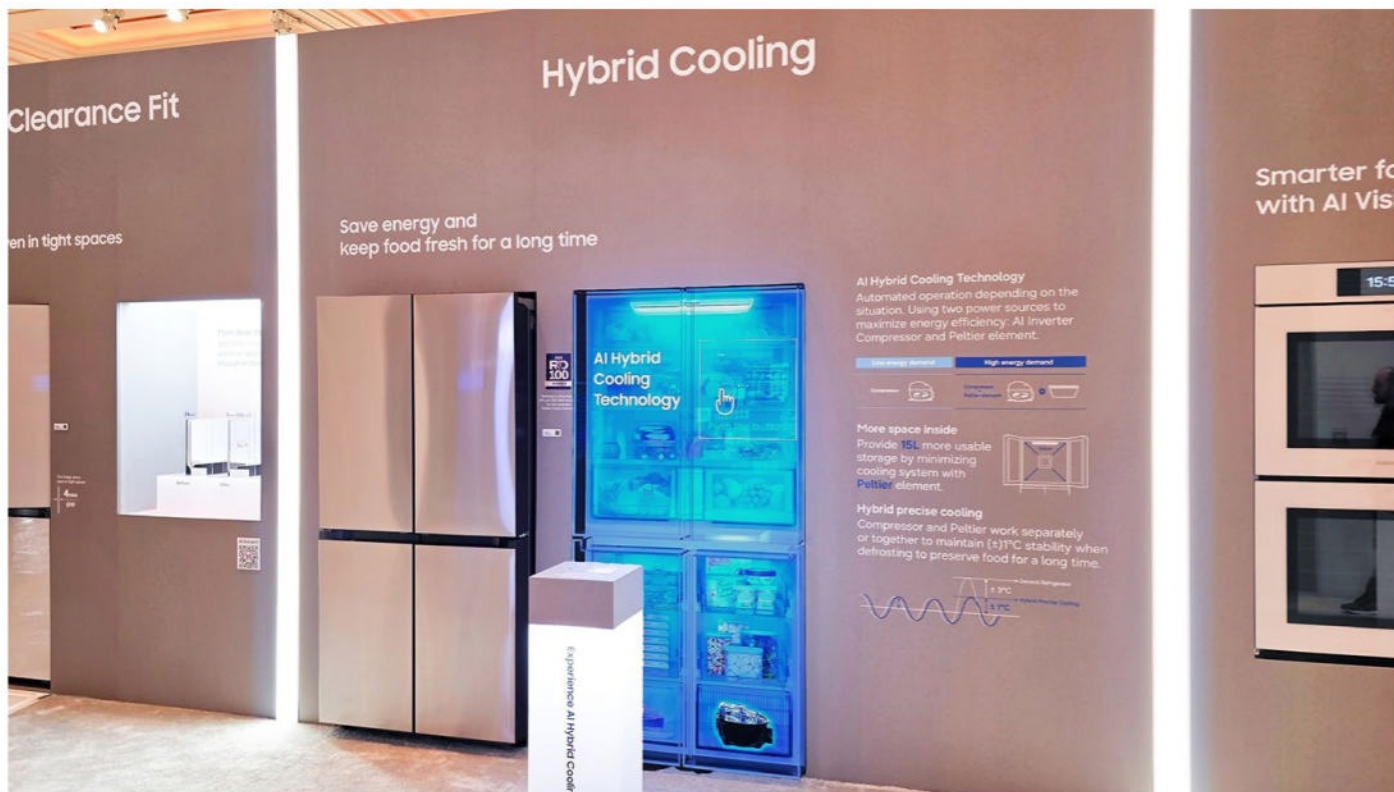
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Security in an AI World

All of this intelligence raises an inevitable question. Who protects the data? Samsung addresses this directly through Knox and Knox Matrix, security frameworks designed to evolve alongside AI itself. By safeguarding data during training, deployment, and real-time usage, Samsung positions security not as a static shield, but as a dynamic process; one that anticipates emerging threats rather than reacting to breaches.

This emphasis on trust is critical. As AI becomes more intimate, security becomes existential.



Summation

SAMSUNG CES 2026: A Cultural Shift, Not a Product Cycle

Samsung's CES 2026 presence was not about out-specifying competitors. It was about redefining what progress looks like in a world already saturated with technology.

The company's "*Companion to AI Living*" vision suggests a future where devices do not clamor for attention but quietly support intention. Where entertainment adapts to mood. Where homes anticipate needs. Where care begins before crisis.

This is a more mature, albeit unsettling vision of AI - not flashy, not dominating, but embedded. And that may be Samsung's most compelling move yet. In 2026, the future did not arrive shouting. It arrived listening.

KANDY SPOTLIGHT PRODUCTS

On the following pages, we offer expanded reviews of three topline CES 2026 Samsung AI reveals. Each review dives deeper than the prior recaps, framing why these products matter now.



AI-ENABLED PET CARE

Because “Good Boy” Deserves Preventive Medicine Too

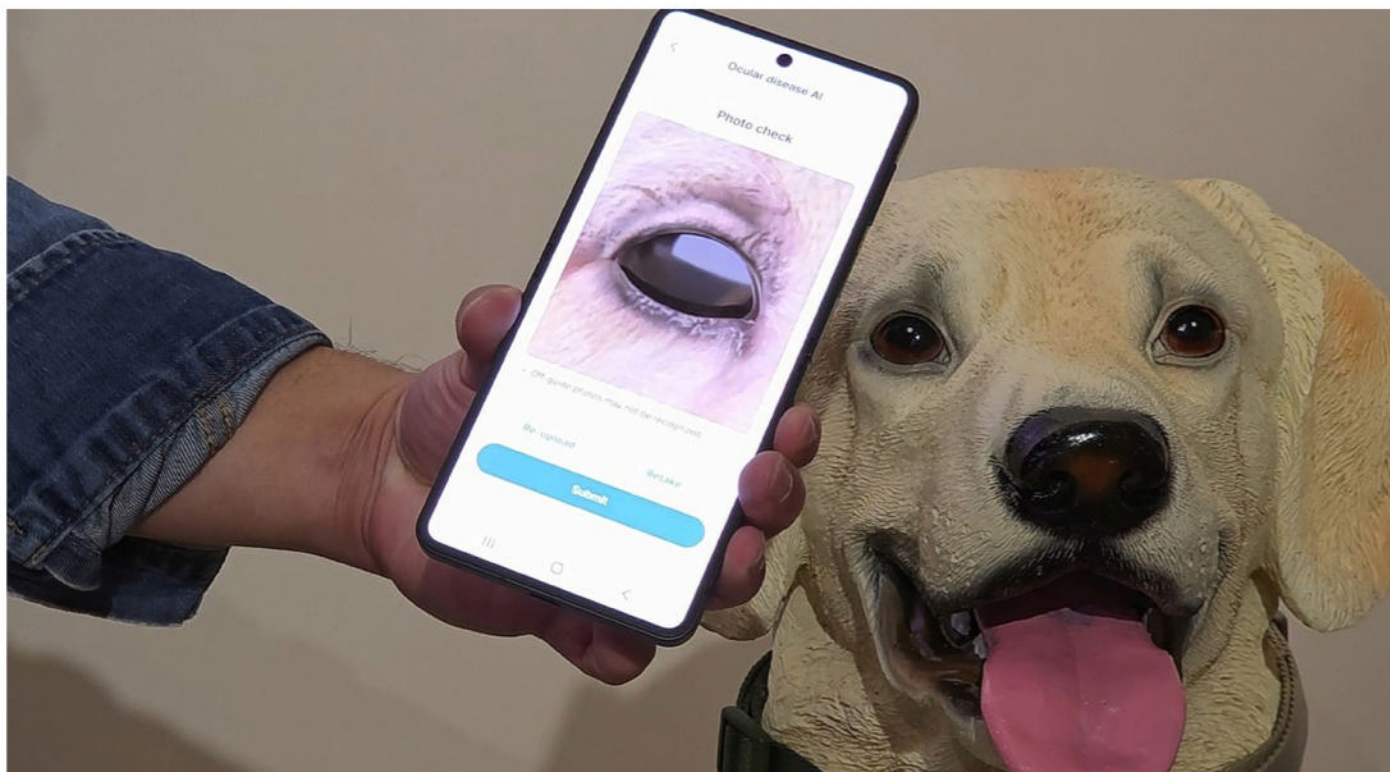
Samsung’s AI-powered Pet Care initiative may be one of the quietest reveals at CES 2026, but it is also one of the most revealing about where consumer technology is headed. Pets, long treated as emotional companions rather than data participants, are now being folded into the same intelligent ecosystem that manages sleep, food, and home security.

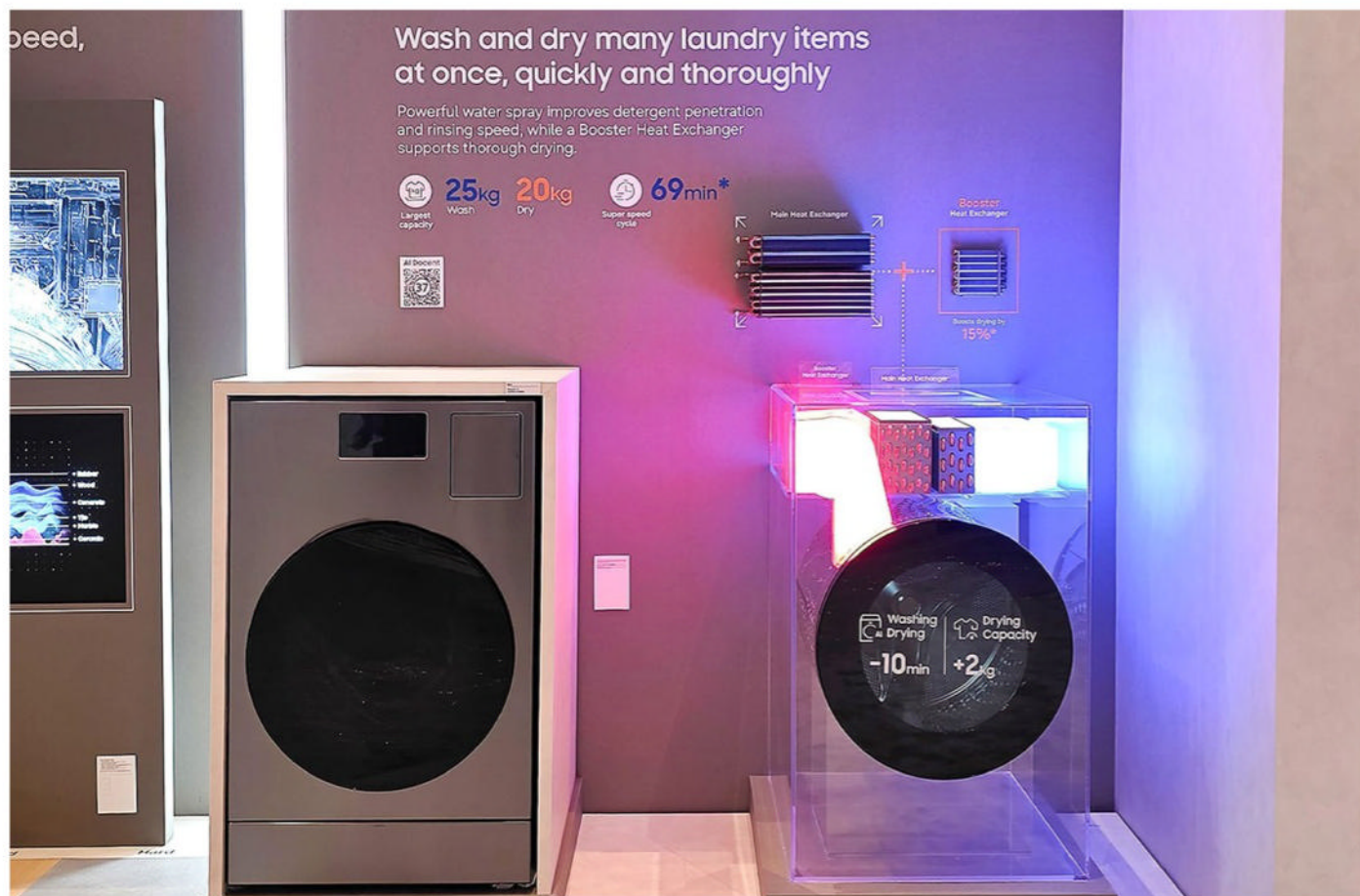
Through SmartThings Pet Care, Samsung uses AI-driven image analysis to evaluate pet health by interpreting photos taken inside the home. With on-screen guidance, users capture images that the system analyzes for indicators of common conditions such as dental disease, patellar luxation, and cataracts. The emphasis here is not diagnosis, but early awareness - flagging potential issues before they escalate into costly or traumatic interventions.

What makes this significant is not just the technology, but the philosophical shift. Samsung is extending the definition of “family health” beyond humans, recognizing that pets occupy emotional, financial, and caregiving space within modern households. AI Pet Care reframes veterinary wellness from episodic visits to continuous observation without turning the home into a clinical environment.

Equally important is how seamlessly this feature integrates into the broader SmartThings ecosystem. Pet monitoring does not exist as a standalone app demanding attention. It becomes part of the ambient intelligence of the home, quietly alerting users only when something deviates from normal behavior or appearance.

For you, the KANDY reader, this marks a shift from reactive pet ownership to intentional stewardship. It’s not about replacing vets. It’s about fewer emergencies, fewer surprises, hopefully smaller vet bills, and longer stretches of uncomplicated companionship.





BESPOKE AI LAUNDRY COMBO

The End of Laundry as a Chore, Not a Ritual

Laundry is one of the last domestic tasks stubbornly resistant to glamour. Samsung's Bespoke AI Laundry Combo does not attempt to romanticize it. Instead, it removes the most universally hated part: the transfer.

By combining washing and drying into a single, AI-optimized unit, the Laundry Combo eliminates the friction point that has defined the chore for decades. But the real story lies in how AI reshapes the process itself.

The 2026 model introduces enhanced super-speed cycles and improved drying performance, driven by AI systems that adapt to fabric type, load weight, and moisture levels in real time. Rather than relying on static presets, the machine continuously adjusts conditions mid-cycle, reducing wear on clothing while optimizing time and energy usage.

This is about reclaiming time lost to interruption. In Samsung's framing, AI exists to absorb cognitive and physical labor so that daily life feels lighter. Laundry becomes something that happens rather than something that demands participation.

The Bespoke line's design language reinforces this shift. The appliance is designed to live visibly in modern homes rather than hide in basements or utility closets. Samsung understands that premium users do not just want automation; they want technology that aligns with their aesthetic values.

For you, the KANDY reader, the Bespoke AI Laundry Combo speaks to a deeper promise: that adulthood no longer means resignation to time-consuming, menial tasks.

FAMILY HUB REFRIGERATOR

The Refrigerator as Command Center

If Samsung's CES 2026 strategy has a physical anchor, it is the Family Hub refrigerator, now upgraded with AI Vision powered by Google Gemini. This appliance represents Samsung's clearest articulation of "AI Living": intelligence embedded at the center of daily routine.

With the latest AI Vision upgrade, the refrigerator now tracks food items as they enter and exit, significantly improving recognition accuracy and reducing manual input. This seemingly modest improvement unlocks a cascade of functionality: automatic inventory awareness, smarter recipe recommendations, and predictive grocery insights.

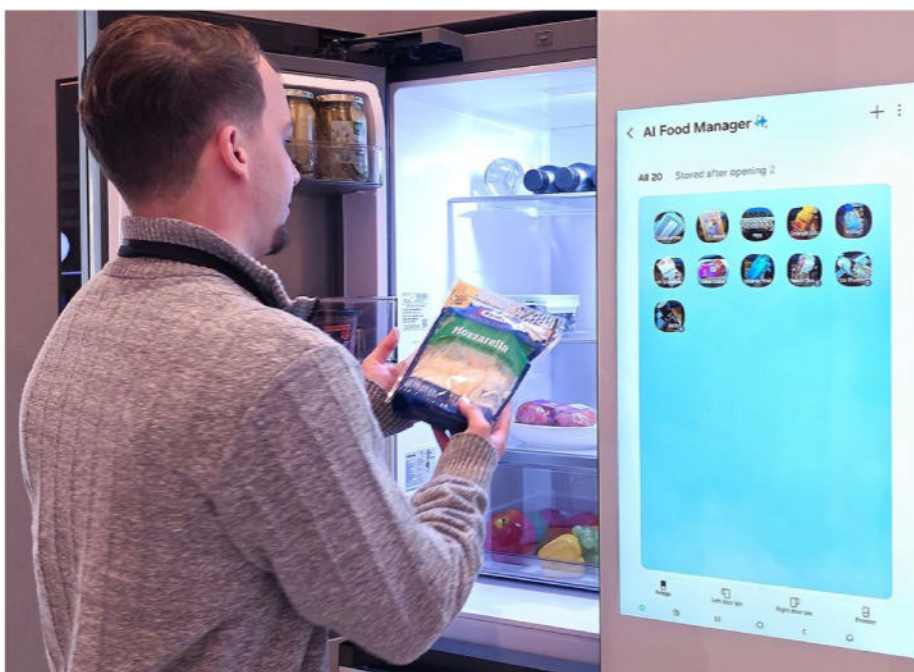
Features like "What's for Today?" gamify decision-making, offering suggestions based on what is available or purely, at random, to reduce the mental fatigue of planning meals. Once selected, recipes flow seamlessly into SmartThings Food, providing step-by-step guidance and sending instructions directly to connected cooking appliances.

The standout addition is Video to Recipe, which converts cooking videos into structured, follow-along instructions without forcing users to pause, rewind, or juggle devices. It's a subtle but transformative shift: content consumption becomes actionable rather than aspirational.

Samsung extends this intelligence through FoodNote, a weekly digest that summarizes eating patterns, highlights frequently used ingredients, and flags items due for restocking. Combined with Voice ID, the refrigerator recognizes individual family members, tailoring information, reminders, and recommendations.

The refrigerator becomes less a cold storage unit and more a domestic strategist, quietly organizing nutrition, time, and consumption habits in the background.

Wellness is no longer performative or extreme. It is structured, supported, and integrated into everyday behavior. The Family Hub does not ask you to become a different person. How weird would that be? We already contend with that from our wives, mistresses, and girlfriends. No, the Family Hub adapts to who you already are. Are you ready for this KANDY reader?





WHY THESE THREE MATTER

Pet Care, Bespoke AI Laundry, and the Family Hub refrigerator reveal Samsung's real CES 2026 message: AI succeeds when it removes friction without erasing humanity.

These products are not flashy screens or speculative futures. They focus on not only the emotional but core centers of modern life: our pets, our clothes, our food.

Control Without Conscious Effort

Samsung's most consequential CES 2026 reveals are not its largest screens or loudest announcements. They are the systems that intervene where daily life is already overloaded: care, maintenance, and decision-making.

AI Pet Care addresses a reality most tech companies ignore—pets generate emotional responsibility but receive reactive care. By introducing early detection tools into the home, Samsung shifts pet wellness from emergency response to ongoing awareness, reducing stress, cost, and guesswork for owners.

The Bespoke AI Laundry Combo tackles a different pressure point: time fragmentation. By removing transfers and automating cycle decisions in real time, it collapses an entire chore into a single, unattended action. This is not convenience theater; it is the elimination of wasted effort.

The Family Hub refrigerator completes the triad by attacking decision fatigue. Meal planning, grocery tracking, and nutrition awareness are no longer manual or aspirational—they are systematized. The fridge does not “suggest” better habits; it enforces structure without requiring discipline.

Together, these products reflect a clear strategy: Samsung is embedding intelligence where people already lose time, energy, and attention. The value is not novelty. The value is waking up to a day that asks less of you. That is where AI stops feeling like technology and starts quietly supporting the rhythms of everyday life.





KANDY GIRL
OF THE MONTH

ERIKA OTHEN

Photography By: Evolve Photography

Hair By:
Jeremy Nichols
MUA By:
Tana Rosae

[Zinio readers enjoy a second dose from our archives – Erika Othen. Here's a look back at her Kandy Magazine feature and snippets from her interview, shared for the first time in Zinio.]

Erika probably looks very familiar to our reality television readers. She appeared on MTV's *Making The Band 3* and ABC's *True Beauty 2*.

Besides acting and modeling, Erika sings, writes, and produces her own original music in addition to hosting her own weekly radio show, "Beauty and The Grumble", which discusses celebrity gossip, politics and current events in a clever, dynamic and comedic way.

In 2011, she made her Primetime sitcom debut in the premiere episode of the 'New Girl' on Fox as well as in the Lifetime documentary 'Project 5'.

On the following pages, Erika shares with us about her experience on *True Beauty 2*.

"As far as how my experience went on True Beauty, it was definitely an interesting time for me. When I first signed up for the show, I was under the impression we were competing to become the 'Face of Vegas,' so no one really understood what we were really getting ourselves into once the cameras started rolling. It turns out, we were actually getting 'punked' by Ashton Kutcher and Tyra Banks because we were all really competing in an inner beauty competition filled with secret, hidden challenges to determine whether or not we were 'good people'" as they so eloquently liked to put it."

"I can honestly say I was proud of the progress I made during the taping of the show and, as it aired, I feel my true character and intentions were accurately portrayed. My family, specifically my mother, was proud of me and in the end, that's all I can ask for. I think people don't fully understand how stressful the taping of a competition reality show can really be. I like to think of it as a pressure cooker where the people behind the cameras are constantly pushing buttons and creating a very stressful environment for the cast. It is television and it would not be good TV without the drama, right?"

"There are no cell phones, no televisions, no computers and you literally have no contact with the outside world or your family throughout the entire duration of taping, which could last months. Throw in constant challenges every day, never knowing a schedule or what the next hour is going to bring, never being able to leave to go anywhere without approval or supervision, the constant stress of potentially being eliminated and then the constant flow of alcohol into the mix and it could literally drive someone crazy."

"In the end, I realized I'm a lot stronger than I ever thought I was through this process and that I can work well under pressure. I found I'm especially resilient and resourceful under stress and I can easily adapt to any situation thrown at me. These were all things I couldn't have fully realized about myself until thrown into the 'pressure cooker' of reality TV."

"Although there is a stigma attached to it, I believe everything happens for a reason and I was able to use it as a platform to push my identity out to the world. I believe it has actually helped me with my confidence and in believing in myself. I definitely don't regret being a part of it and, in its own weird way, I think it helped me realize some things about myself I wouldn't have acknowledged if I hadn't been a part of the experience."

"If you were to ask me if I'd do it all over again, my answer would be yes. Not because I'm a glutton for punishment, but rather I believe everything happens for a reason and during that time, I probably needed to go through the tests and the stress to learn, grow and fully appreciate the journey rather than simply the end result."

Erika Othen
KANDY INGREDIENTS

Measurements: 34D-25-35

Height: 5'7

Weight: 115 LBS

Hair Color: Blonde

Eye Color: Hazel

IMDB Credits
www.imdb.com/name/nm1993526/

Photography By:
Neil "Frizzycube" Nakahara
Makeup & Hair By:
Camille Neko



Photography By: Evolve Photography

Hair By:
Jeremy Nichols

MUA By:
Tana Rosae





DJ LC

LAURA CAVENDER

A WOMAN ON THE RISE

HOW DID A CHEERLEADER FROM A SMALL LITTLE TOWN IN TEXAS RAPIDLY ASCEND TO ONE OF THE HOTTEST, GLOBAL SHEJAY'S?

Determination! The one thing we took away from our conversations with Laura Cavender, professionally she is known as DJ LC, is that she is a very determined woman. She has an inner strength that comes from a very personal battle where she fought cancer with her mother for ten years. In a town where people take pride in tearing you down, Laura's inner strength helps her rise above it all and keep her eye focused on the prize. What is the prize? Well, you are going to have to read on to find out.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY: RAQUEL RISCHARD
MUA / HAIR : SUNSET BLONDE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: AARON RIVEROLL
MUA: ROKAEL LIZAMA
HAIR: NORMA BLAQUE



Editor's Note: In Year 1 of KANDY Magazine, Laura Cavender graces our third cover. We now provide this feature for the first time for our Zinio readers. Enjoy!

CHEERLEADER TO FITNESS CHAMPION

Where are you originally from? Victoria, Texas

Where is that? A small town in south Texas.

Why fitness competitions? At the time, I was helping my mother with her 10-year battle with cancer. To deal with such incredible personal adversity, I channeled the energy and motivation into working out and transforming my body in a positive way. It was a rewarding feeling to maximize the inspiration my mother gave me, and the appreciation I have for health and life itself.

How does a girl from Victoria end up in Los Angeles? I became pro and competed nationally, and travelled extensively to shoot in LA. Eventually, it just made sense to move there.

How many titles had you won? 15 Shows as a Figure Competitor.

What was your proudest fitness accomplishment? There is so much I am proud and honored to have achieved in the fitness industry. Winning titles, countless fitness magazines and fitness videos. I think the proudest part is the knowledge I've gained in nutrition, and to know my own body and use that knowledge for life.

Do you still compete? I would love to but I'm so busy with djing and traveling. I still maintain a fit physique and still enjoy fitness photo shoots.

What fitness tips do you have for our guy readers? "You are what you eat"!! I would say to the guy readers focus on eating healthy and being lean and fit. It isn't always about being big and buff and how heavy you can lift in the gym.

FITNESS COMPETITOR TO SHEJAY

How did you get your start in DJ'ing?

Remixing cheerleading tracks in high school, then taking it to another level with schooling at Scratch Academy in Los Angeles, California.

Have you ever played for military? Not yet. I would love to and do something good for our troops.

How would you describe your DJ mix? It really depends on the venue and where I'm playing, it literally changes at each show! I like to mix it up and keep the music fresh and exciting for myself and the crowd! I love old school hip hop mixed with house or electro house!

What do you want the crowd to feel? I love dropping upbeat sexy beats bringing the room together in a positive vibe!

What's your favorite aspect of Djing? Watching people have a great time & dance!

Where are some of the places you have DJ'd? Dubai, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Italy, France, Mexico, all over the US, many places.

We understand Dubai was interesting. Yes, it sure did!! I received incredible hospitality from the people of Dubai. They liked me so much they even wanted me to stay and hold down a DJ residency spot. There's a lot of money in Dubai, and they don't hold back when it comes to spending it!

What did you do with all your free time there? I got to experience all the fun things Dubai had to offer. Traveling around to the manmade islands, spending time at the beach, on boats, working out, hanging out with Flo-Rida and my agent (Mike Esterman), enjoying the world cup polo event. Lots of fun stuff to do.

Did you have to wear a veil? No. I was given special privileges being the guest of the country's ruler.

WRAP US UP WITH 3 LC THOUGHTS

"Everything happens for a Reason"

"I never wear matching socks!"

"Red wine is my favorite drink."















I LOVE DROPPING UPBEAT SEXY
BEATS BRINGING THE ROOM
TOGETHER IN A POSITIVE VIBE!

2026 GLADIATOR SHADOW OPS REVIEW



Shadow Ops: Jeep's "First Mission" Truck With Main-Character Energy

The 2026 Gladiator Shadow Ops doesn't read like a trim package. It reads like a mission brief. Jeep is rolling it out as the first "drop" in a Convoy campaign, and the message is loud even when the truck is dressed in black: this is for people who don't want a pickup that blends in, they want a pickup that looks like it's on assignment.

The Gladiator already lives in a weird, wonderful category by itself: part midsize truck, part open-air Jeep, part rolling personality test. Shadow Ops leans into that with a stealth-forward aesthetic and the kind of factory gear that signals you plan to leave pavement. It's not trying to convince the practical buyer who cross-shops appliances. It's built for the buyer who cross-shops adrenaline.

The best part is that Shadow Ops doesn't pretend it's subtle. The theme is intentional, cohesive, and aggressively confident - like Jeep decided your truck should look as it belongs next to a rally point, not a grocery store. Of course it'll still end up at a grocery store. But it'll do it with a presence and isn't such a status half the purchase when you're buying a Jeep truck for fun, not forgiveness.

Shadow Ops is a vibe but it's also a signal: Jeep is still the brand willing to sell you a factory-built excuse to go disappear for the weekend.

Powertrain Reality Check

The V6 Isn't the Flex, The Capability Is

The 2026 Gladiator doesn't win by reinventing the engine bay. It wins by being the only pickup that still feels like it's half truck, half open-air escape plan. Under the hood, the formula stays familiar: 3.6-liter V6, 285 horsepower, 260 lb-ft, paired with an 8-speed automatic. Not exotic, not turbo-drunk, not trying to be the fastest thing on the freeway. It's the kind of powertrain that says, "I'm here to work, crawl, tow, and keep going."

Where Gladiator talks loudest is in the numbers Jeep owners care about when the pavement ends: crawl ratio up to 77:1, 4x4 system choices, and the geometry stats that tell you whether you're scraping your pride on rocks or clearing them like you meant it. Jeep also leans into those headline utility numbers: up to 7,700 lbs towing and up to 1,720 lbs payload (depending on configuration). That's the grown-up side of this truck's personality, the part that justifies your chaos to the people who share your driveway.

Shadow Ops doesn't pretend it's a drag-strip hero. It's a "get there, get back, and look good doing it" machine; more mission-ready than muscle car and honestly that fits the brand better.



The Look

Blackout Styling That Isn't Shy About Being Seen

Jeep calls Shadow Ops “stealth-inspired,” which is hilarious because it’s stealth in the same way a nightclub bouncer is “low profile.” The design is a deliberate blackout theme: Satin Black grille, signature hood and fender decals, tailgate graphics... the details meant to read instantly, even if you only catch it in your peripheral vision as it rolls by like trouble with a bed.

Shadow Ops looks like an integrated idea. Too many “special editions” are just wheels plus badges plus a marketing paragraph. Shadow Ops comes with the kind of cohesive visual language Jeep buyers eat up because it matches what the truck is supposed to do. Dark trim, aggressive stance, steel hardware; everything points in the same direction: this is built for the people who don’t want a truck that looks “nice.” They want one that looks ready.

Jeep also ties the Gladiator identity to its broader 2026 vibe: limited editions, new colors, and the whole Convoy narrative on the model page so Shadow Ops lands inside an ecosystem of “collectible” Gladiators rather than feeling like a random one-off.

If you’re a reader who thinks subtlety is overrated and “parking lot presence” is part of the spec sheet, Shadow Ops is basically Jeep speaking your language fluently.





Tools, Not Toys

Winch + Steel Bumpers + Tow Package = Factory Confidence

This is the section where Shadow Ops earns its “editor-approved” stamp, because the hardware list isn’t fluff. Jeep leads with the factory-installed winch for a reason: it’s a recovery flex that usually lives in the aftermarket world. Factory matters, not just for warranty peace of mind, but because factory integration is cleaner, safer, and less “my cousin wired it.”

Then Jeep adds heavy-duty steel front and rear bumpers, and folds in the Trailer Tow Package. That’s not just rugged cosplay. Steel bumpers are there for hits, scrapes, and the kind of trail geometry that punishes plastic. Tow package is there because Gladiator owners actually use the bed and hitch: boats, bikes, ATVs, your friend’s broken ego. Shadow Ops is the version that acknowledges the truck has two lives: weekday utility and weekend misbehavior.

Jeep also calls out available body-color Freedom Top and body-color fender flares, which are the “clean build” items buyers love because matching panels make a Gladiator look intentional, not pieced together. Shadow Ops is basically: mission vibe outside, functional gear up front, and enough practical protection to survive the stuff you’ll swear “wasn’t that bad.”

Shadow Ops is one of the rare packages that reads like it was assembled by someone who actually goes outside.

2026 Updates That Matter

Easier Door Removal, Open-Air Addiction, Real-World Usability

Jeep finally did the thing every Gladiator/Wrangler owner has wanted since the first time they fought their own hardware: a new quick-release door hinge system designed to make door removal faster and easier; no tools, no drama, no turning “doors off day” into an afternoon project. That’s a quality-of-life upgrade that impacts ownership, because the Gladiator’s magic trick is the open-air freedom. If it’s annoying, people do it less. If it’s easy, they do it constantly.

Jeep also keeps feeding the collector energy with new/limited colors and edition storytelling because Gladiator buyers are part off-road enthusiast, part “this is my personality now.” The 2026 model page leans into limited editions and “Convoy” as a lineup, which helps explain why Shadow Ops exists in the first place: it’s a drop culture approach to trucks.

And tech-wise, Jeep’s site pushes the “biggest standard touchscreen in class” angle at 12.3 inches, plus Uconnect features aimed at the adventurous crowd, like trail guides. The point isn’t luxury; it’s confidence. Modern cabin tech makes the truck feel less like a utilitarian relic and more like something you can daily without feeling punished for your choices.

Yes, Shadow Ops is “tactical” on the outside. But 2026 Gladiator updates make the whole platform more livable, which is what keeps the fantasy from becoming a chore.



2026 Jeep® Gladiator Willys '41 buzz model channels military heritage with rugged design and trail-ready capability.



What Shadow Ops Costs

Let's talk money the way your readers talk money: not "what's the package," but "what's the damage."

The 2026 Gladiator lineup starts in the high-\$30Ks and climbs quickly depending on trim. The Rubicon, the foundation for Shadow Ops, starts at \$52,000. Shadow Ops is an added package on top of that, priced at \$4,995. Jeep also frames it as effectively \$2,605 more than a comparably equipped Rubicon that already includes the matching body-color roof and fender flares meaning they're nudging you to think of Shadow Ops as "the gear and attitude upgrade," not just a sticker tax.

What does that mean in real-world terms? A Rubicon-based Shadow Ops build starts at \$56,995 before destination, dealer add-ons, and the inevitable "because I wanted it" options. And yes... once fees and choices get involved, you can easily be staring down a number that feels a lot closer to sixty than fifty.

KANDY VERDICT

Shadow Ops is the Gladiator for the buyer who wants the Rubicon's credibility, plus factory recovery hardware, plus a look that reads like a storyline. It's not cheap. But it's not trying to be. This is a truck that sells confidence; the kind you feel when you have a winch up front, steel everywhere it counts, and a blacked-out presence that makes the parking lot look like your staging area.



The image shows a close-up of a person's hand holding a white tablet. On the tablet is the cover of 'Kandy' magazine, which features a blonde woman (Tiffany Selby) in a blue and white checkered bikini top and colorful jewelry. The word 'Kandy' is written in large, stylized purple letters at the top of the cover, and 'TIFFANY SELBY' is written in colorful block letters at the bottom. In the top left corner of the overall image, the 'Kandy' logo is displayed in a white, cursive font. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Kandy®

WHAT KIND OF MAN READS KANDY?

He doesn't just follow trends, he seeds them. He's curious about the new sport dominating the global scene, the luxury watch so elegantly engineered it sparks a conversation, the deep-dive gadget that makes the rest of his gear feel like yesterday's news.

He knows style is more than the fabric, it's the vibe; he knows fitness is more than reps, it's discipline; he knows entertainment is more than screens, it's moments. He's the man who finishes a red-eye flight, checks his watch in the lounge, and quietly smiles at the next level he knows he's living. He's sharp, not showy, and he's always chasing what's next. He reads KANDY because he moves fast: the gym, the boardroom, the trip to Bali. He's in pursuit of more: more style, more travel, more flavor in life. Whether he's planning the next adventure, polishing his look before the meeting, or catching the game that changes his weekend - KANDY is in his feed. For the man who's always moving, always upgrading, always ahead - KANDY. If that's you, you're the KANDY man.

THE 2026 DODGE CHARGER SCAT PACK REVIEW



The Return of Loud: Dodge Just Gave the Internet a Reason to Argue Again

The new Dodge Charger Scat Pack isn't here to politely "expand the lineup." It's here to start problems, the fun kind. Dodge is basically planting a flag in the modern muscle-car ground and yelling, "We're still doing this," except now the flag is twin-turbo and the yelling is coming through a performance-tuned active exhaust that sounds like it wants to pick a fight with your neighborhood's noise ordinance.

This is the Charger's most important trick: it doesn't try to win you over with an apology tour. It shows up with old-school attitude, new-school boost, and the kind of numbers that make your group chat suddenly very active. Dodge is calling it the most powerful car under \$55,000, which is an aggressively specific flex but also exactly the kind of flex Dodge was born to deliver.

And the deeper story is even better: this Charger is built to end the false choice between "I want to drive it every day" and "I want it to feel like a weapon." All-wheel drive is standard, but rear-drive is still on the menu when you want to get irresponsible. Two doors, four doors - Dodge is basically giving you permission to pick your chaos level and your practicality level without making you switch brands.

If the last decade of performance cars was about being clinically good, this Charger is about being emotionally correct. It's engineered to light up your senses, your tires, and your comment section. Dodge didn't make a car to keep the peace. Dodge made a car to make sure you still have a pulse.

The Powertrain

SIXPACK Isn't Cute, It's a Warning Label

Let's be clear: "SIXPACK" is not just a nostalgic sticker to make your uncle feel seen. Dodge revived the name like a dare, then backed it up with a 3.0-liter Hurricane twin-turbo inline-six that hits with the kind of force you can feel through your molars. In Scat Pack form, it's the high-output version (550 horsepower and 531 lb-ft of torque) and the important part is not just the peak number, it's how fast the shove arrives. Dodge says it's delivering the majority of its torque early, then hanging onto it across the meat of the rev range. Translation: you don't "wait" for this thing. You breathe on the throttle, and it answers like it's been waiting all day for you to do something dumb.

And then Dodge does what Dodge always does: it makes the performance features sound like a menu at a bad-decision restaurant. Line Lock is standard; because of course it is. Launch Control is there to help you squeeze maximum violence out of the first 60 feet. And the active exhaust is tuned to change personality by drive mode, which means you can be civilized when you have to... and absolutely not when you don't.

The best part is the identity shift this enables. Dodge is basically saying: "You want muscle? Fine. But it's 2026. Your muscle is twin-turbo now, and it doesn't need to be fragile." It's a modern powertrain with a classic mission: make you grin like you got away with something.

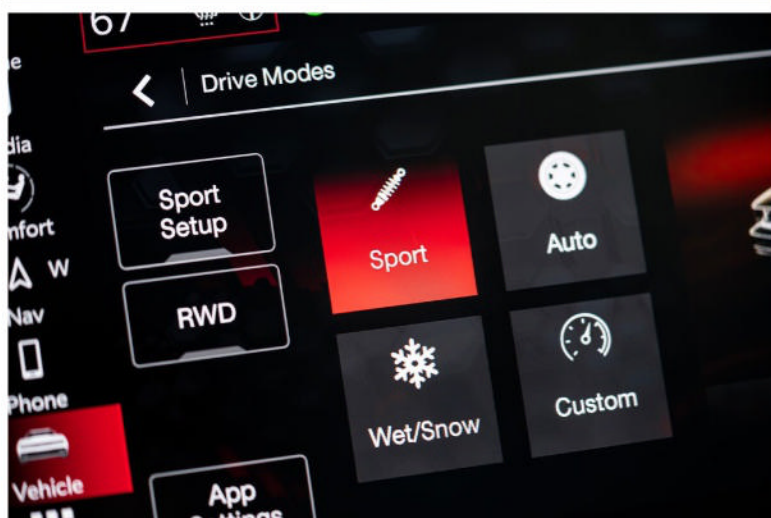




The Numbers

This Thing Moves Like It Has a Beef with Physics

Dodge isn't playing coy with the performance claims. The Scat Pack hits 0-60 in 3.9 seconds, runs the quarter in 12.2, and carries a 177-mph top speed. That's not "quick for the price." That's "quick enough to make you re-evaluate your maturity."



What makes it even nastier is how the car is engineered to deliver those numbers without demanding perfect conditions or perfect skills. Standard all-wheel drive means you don't have to treat every launch like a prayer. You can put power down when the pavement is cold, the road is questionable, or the universe is in one of its moody phases.

But Dodge also understands the thing muscle-car people don't say out loud: sometimes you don't want "optimal." You want fun. So, it gives you rear-wheel-drive capability at the push of a button - meaning the Charger can behave like a responsible adult when traction matters, then turn into a tire-hazing menace when your inner chaos starts tapping the glass. Dodge even highlights a rear-drive mode that sends everything to the back so you can do the sacred rituals: drifts, donuts, smoke, laughter.

In other words: this isn't a car that only performs when you treat it gently. It's a car designed to reward the kind of driver who sometimes chooses bad decisions over modesty.





AWD When You Need It, RWD When You Want It: The Best Personality Disorder

This is the Charger's party trick, and it's a good one: standard AWD paired with the ability to go full rear-drive on demand. That's not just marketing, it's a whole lifestyle pitch. It means the Charger can play daily-driver, handle wet roads, and survive winter without you pretending you "love the snow." Then, when you're on dry pavement and your morals loosen up, it can turn into the kind of car that leaves black signatures on asphalt.

Dodge's system is built around a wet clutch that can disengage the front axle when you want rear-drive, then reconnect when you want the grip back. Do that burnout routine (Line Lock, heat the tires, smoke the scene), then go right back to AWD for a hard launch that hooks as if it's cheating.

And because Dodge knows people live in reality, it even includes a front-axle disconnect strategy for efficiency when you're not actively being a menace. That's the beauty of this new Charger philosophy: it doesn't require you to choose between "grown-up car" and "fun car." It tries to be both, and it does it in a way that feels deeply Dodge: engineered, dramatic, and borderline irresponsible... on purpose.

This might be the most important evolution of muscle in years: the car isn't less wild. It's just more usable. Dodge basically gave you a switch that toggles between "I'm going to work" and "I'm going to ruin the tires," and that's the kind of innovation Americans believe in.



The Design & Cabin

Widebody Drama with a High-Tech Heartbeat

Dodge didn't shrink-wrap the Charger into some timid, slippery jellybean shape. It went widebody and stayed there: big shoulders, aggressive fascia, and visual confidence that feels like it's wearing a leather jacket indoors because it can. The Scat Pack gets its own hood and fascia treatment, plus details that signal "internal combustion lives here." Dodge knows its audience wants the romance of a real engine, even in an era where everything is trying to turn silent and sensible.

Lighting gets the modern signature treatment, front and rear drama with a recognizable identity. Out back, the "ring of fire" vibe remains the kind of flourish that makes you glance back at it in a parking lot like you're checking your reflection.

Inside, Dodge makes a surprisingly strong case that muscle doesn't have to feel cheap. The cockpit goes driver-forward with a wide-format digital cluster and a center screen angled toward you, plus "Attitude Adjustment" lighting that reacts to drive modes. Dodge just can't resist turning everything into theater. There are serious seat options, performance steering wheel, paddle shifters on Scat Pack, and a cabin that's built to feel like a place you spend time, not just a place you sit while you wait for the next red light.

And then there's the hidden-hatch practicality: fold the rear seats down and you get real cargo space. That's the new Charger pitch in one sentence: muscle that still functions in your real life without losing its personality.



The Price Tag

The Part That Makes This Whole Thing Feel Illegal

Here's the mic-drop detail Dodge is hanging the entire campaign on: the Charger Scat Pack starts at \$54,995. Not "mid-fifties-ish." Not "with a bunch of fine print." \$54,995. That's the headline because it's the rare performance number that lands like a punch.

You're getting 550 horsepower, AWD capability, and the whole burnouts-to-launch-control ecosystem at a price point that's basically designed to terrorize the value conversation.

The Charger R/T AWD starts at \$49,995 with 420 horsepower, which means Dodge is also throwing a second grenade into the segment for people who want the look and the vibe but don't need maximum smoke. And if you want to go four-door, Dodge says it's an additional \$2,000 - a small price to pay for those who want to pretend this is a responsible purchase while still owning something that can embarrass plenty of "serious" performance cars.

What makes the price tag truly spicy is the way the car is engineered to deliver the full muscle-car experience without the old muscle-car compromises. It's not an apology for the future. It's Dodge dragging the future into the parking lot by its collar and making it watch a burnout.



KANDY VERDICT

This new Charger Scat Pack is the kind of car that makes you want to text your ex, buy sunglasses at night, and take the long way home for no reason. It's modern muscle with classic menace, Dodge priced at a level daring you to do it.





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ROG XBOX ALLY AND ALLY X



Xbox Stops Pretending the Couch Is Mandatory

The ROG Xbox Ally and Ally X exist because Xbox finally accepted a hard truth: modern players are not rearranging furniture, syncing HDMI inputs, or waiting patiently for a TV like obedient house pets. Built by ASUS but supervised by Xbox's software sensibilities, these handhelds are an admission that gaming has gone nomadic. This is not "Xbox on the go" cosplay, it is Xbox conceding that the future lives somewhere between a backpack and a power bank, with Windows quietly muzzled in the background.

HARDWARE

Ergonomics: Congratulations, You Listened

Early PC handhelds felt like bricks with delusions of grandeur. ASUS corrected course. The Ally line actually fits human hands, borrowing shamelessly from Xbox controller ergonomics and good. The grips are contoured, the weight is sane, and the Ally X's impulse triggers finally acknowledge that haptics matter when immersion is the point.

Performance splits cleanly by personality. The base Ally is pragmatic, efficient, and battery-conscious; it's the grown adult in the room. The Ally X is the flex piece, armed with AMD's Ryzen AI Z2 Extreme and enough overhead to bully AAA titles without immediately begging for a charger.

One is restraint. The other is indulgence. ASUS wisely lets you choose which version of yourself you want to be.

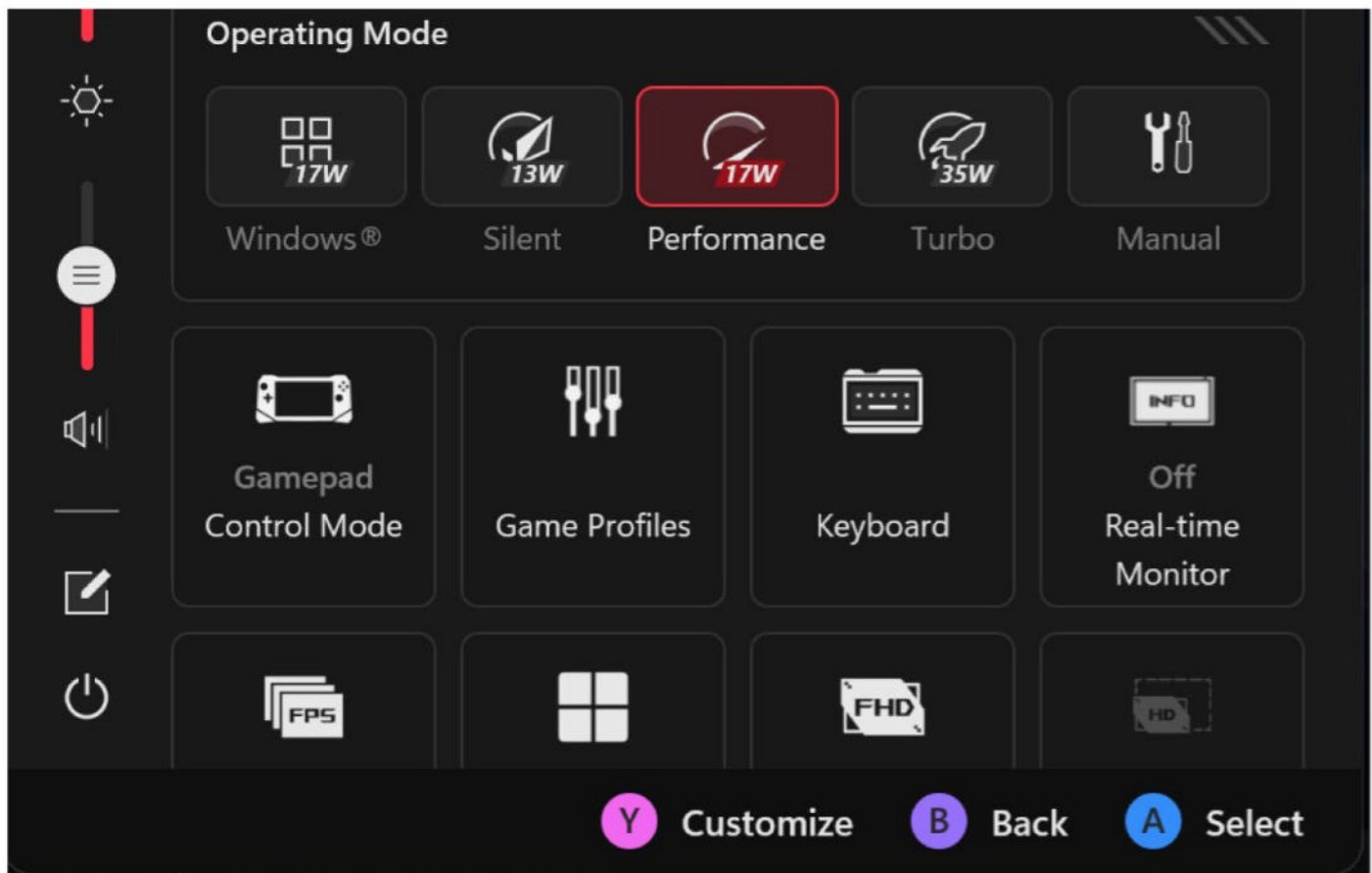


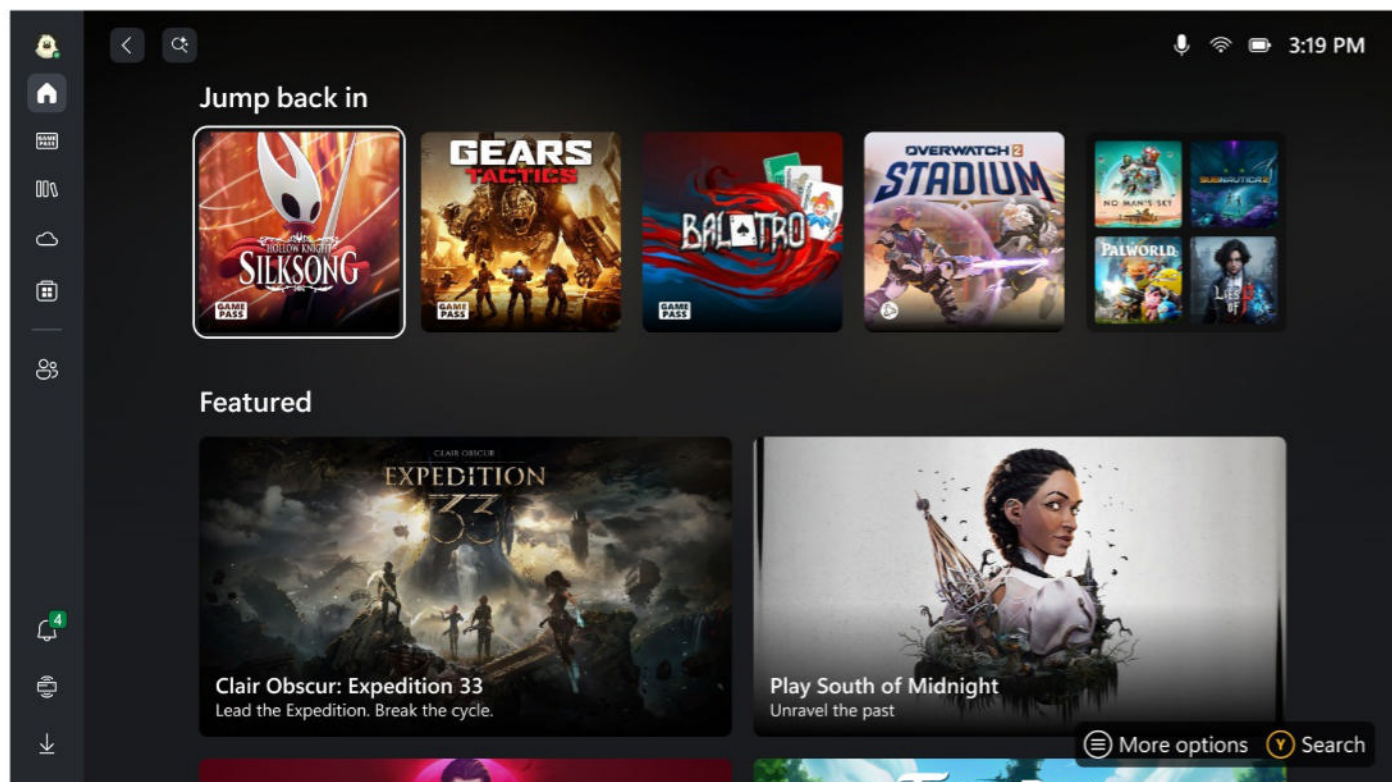
SOFTWARE

Windows, But It Knows It's on Probation

This is where the Ally earns its paycheck. You boot into a full-screen Xbox experience that actually respects controller navigation, minimizes system bloat, and doesn't make you feel like you're doing light accounting before launching a game. Settings are accessible, Game Bar is useful, and Windows 11 stays politely out of sight until summoned.

Unlike most Windows handhelds (which feel like laptops daring you to love them) the Ally treats Windows as infrastructure, not identity. Mods, launchers, and PC nonsense remain available, but they no longer hijack the experience. It's the first Windows gaming handheld that doesn't secretly resent console players.





VERDICT

This Is Xbox's Most Honest Hardware in Years

The ROG Xbox Ally and Ally X are not cute experiments or market hedges. They are a quiet declaration that handheld gaming has graduated from novelty to necessity. The Ally is disciplined, efficient, and realistic. The Ally X is loud, future-facing, and unapologetically premium. Together, they represent Xbox's most self-aware hardware moment in years - one that stops chasing nostalgia and starts chasing relevance. This is not about replacing consoles. It is about admitting that the console is no longer the center of the gaming universe.



QUICK CULTURE CHECK

Steam Deck vs Switch vs Ally

The Nintendo Switch remains the charming minimalist: curated, cozy, and forever allergic to raw power.

The Steam Deck is the chaotic tinkerer, beloved by enthusiasts who enjoy configuring settings almost as much as playing games.

The ROG Xbox Ally lands somewhere more dangerous: polished, flexible, and unembarrassed about wanting mainstream dominance. It doesn't ask you to choose between console ease and PC freedom, it assumes you want both and refuses to apologize for it. That confidence alone makes it the most culturally ambitious handheld in the room





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CRIME 101

RULES ARE MEANT TO BE BROKEN



Photo Credits Dean Rogers, Merrick Morton © 2025 Amazon MGM Studios Content Services LLC

SYNOPSIS

Crime 101 is a sunburned neo-noir that rides the margins of Los Angeles morality, a sleek meditation on discipline and desire. Chris Hemsworth plays Davis, a meticulous jewel thief haunting the 101 freeway with precision crimes that feel almost ceremonial. As he prepares what may be his final score, his trajectory intersects with two figures defined by professional erosion: a high-end insurance executive (Halle Berry) confronting institutional betrayal, and a detective (Mark Ruffalo) whose belief in the law has become both compass and curse. What follows is not a conventional chase, but a slow convergence toward moral inevitability, where choice and consequence become indistinguishable.

THE MOOD

Los Angeles, Unromanticized

Director Bart Layton turns Los Angeles into both playground and pressure cooker. Freeways hum with existential weight, glass towers and shadowed overpasses frame a city governed by transactional ethics, and every sunlit surface feels like it could crack at any moment. This isn't postcard L.A. The environment reflects the film's central anxiety: that identity, in a city obsessed with status, is often confused with accumulation. The city reflects what each character wants and what it withholds, making the setting as morally compromised as the people navigating it.

CRAFT & STYLE

Old-School Thrills, Modern Nerves

Layton's affection for classic heist cinema is evident, but *Crime 101* never slips into nostalgia co-play. The cinematography leans noir without cliché, the editing keeps tension simmering, while *Blanck Mass*'s score operates less as accompaniment than psychological undercurrent. Car chases aren't spectacle for spectacle's sake, they're extensions of character psychology where pressure, momentum, and consequence define outcomes.

CHRIS HEMSWORTH

Gentleman Thief Reimagined

Hemsworth strips away superhero mythmaking and replaces it with restraint. Davis is not played as a romantic outlaw, but as a man whose discipline has calcified into isolation. Physical confidence gives way to psychological attrition, revealing a character who has mastered systems yet failed to construct a life beyond them. Hemsworth resists the temptation to mythologize, instead allowing vulnerability to surface through silence, hesitation, and the constant suggestion of an exit that may no longer exist.





HALLE BERRY

Power, Rage, and the Second Act

Halle Berry delivers one of her most resonant performances in years as Sharon Coombs, a woman who has spent her life protecting other people's wealth while watching her own value quietly erode. Berry leans into controlled fury... professional polish masking years of dismissal. Her character isn't tempted by crime so much as exhausted by inequity. Sharon's choices feel earned, uncomfortable, and sharply reflective of modern conversations around gender, age, and power.

MARK RUFFALO

The Law with a Fracture Line

Ruffalos' politics are whack but his skills as an actor are polished. His Detective Lou Lubesnik is a man clinging to principle while everything else in his life slips. He's ruffled, stubborn, and morally inflexible, yet deeply human. Ruffalo finds empathy in the character's flaws, playing him as someone who believes in the law not because it's perfect, but because without it, nothing holds. His quiet war with institutional complacency gives the film its ethical backbone.

THE ENSEMBLE

Danger at the Edges

Barry Keoghan brings feral volatility as Ormon, the kind of threat that doesn't plan but only reacts. Nick Nolte's Money lingers as a vestige of an older economy of crime, equal parts mentor and parasite. Monica Barbaro provides tonal counterweight as Maya, grounding the film in emotional authenticity and underscoring what remains at stake when abstraction gives way to intimacy. Every supporting role feels intentional, adding texture rather than noise to the film's moral chessboard.





VERDICT

No Clean Getaways

Crime 101 rejects the fantasy of consequence-free mastery. Its central question is not who will succeed, but what survival ultimately requires. Through disciplined direction and performances of measured intensity, the film argues that moral compromise rarely announces itself as betrayal; more often, it arrives disguised as necessity. Stylish, thoughtful, and anchored by performances that refuse easy archetypes, the film plays like a quiet challenge to the audience: Who do you root for when everyone is compromised? In a genre obsessed with clever departures, Crime 101 insists on something more sobering: a reckoning. And it lingers long after the freeway disappears behind you.

Studio Amazon MGM Studios

Directed by Bart Layton

Starring Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Barry Keoghan, Monica Barbaro, Corey Hawkins, Jennifer Jason Leigh with Nick Nolte and Halle Berry



**CHRIS
HEMSWORTH** **MARK
RUFFALO** **BARRY
KEOGHAN** **AND HALLE
BERRY**

CRIME 101

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BASED ON THE
NOVELLA BY **DON WINSLOW**
SCREENPLAY
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DIRECTED
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DEAD MAN'S WIRE REVIEW



Photo Credits Stefania Rosini/Row K Entertainment

SYNOPSIS

When Grievance Becomes Theater

Dead Man's Wire revisits a nearly unbelievable 1977 hostage standoff and reframes it as a study in spectacle, grievance, and American self-mythology. Bill Skarsgård portrays Tony Kiritsis, a financially cornered man who stages a grotesquely theatrical kidnapping to force the system that failed him to finally listen. Gus Van Sant resists moral instruction, allowing the crisis to unfold in real time as law enforcement, media, and public fascination collide. The result is not a true-crime reenactment, but a pressure chamber in which outrage, desperation, and performance feed upon one another.

Starring Bill Skarsgård, Dacre Montgomery, Colman Domingo, Myha'la, Cary Elwes, and Al Pacino

VAN SANT'S RETURN

The Outsider, Amplified

This marks Gus Van Sant's most volatile work in years, and one of his most pointed. Long fascinated by outsiders pressed to the edge of visibility, Van Sant approaches Kiritsis not as a villain nor as a folk hero, but as a symptom... an individual warped by institutional indifference and emboldened by attention. His direction is stripped of sentimentality, favoring immediacy over polish, and urgency over explanation. The film breathes with the instability of its subject, refusing the comfort of narrative distance.





BILL SKARSGÅRD

A Human Tripwire

Skarsgård's Tony is exhausting, mesmerizing, and unnervingly funny. He sustains a level of manic volatility that feels less performed than endured. Rage, charm, self-pity, and delusion cycle through him without warning, creating a character whose need to be heard is as dangerous as his weapon. Skarsgård avoids caricature by grounding Tony's grandstanding in wounded pride and a frantic desire for validation, making him both grotesque and painfully recognizable.

THE COUNTERWEIGHT

Captive Humanity

Opposite Skarsgård, Dacre Montgomery delivers a quietly devastating performance as Richard Hall, the unwilling human fulcrum of the spectacle. Bound physically and psychologically to his captor, Richard's ordeal unfolds inwardly, marked by fear, disbelief, and reluctant empathy. Montgomery resists melodrama, allowing vulnerability to surface through restraint. The film's emotional core resides in the claustrophobic intimacy between these two men, whose shared isolation briefly collapses class, power, and ideology.





MEDIA AS ACCOMPLICE

The Camera Never Blinks

Dead Man's Wire is as much about the birth of modern media frenzy as it is about crime. Television cameras transform a desperate act into national theater, amplifying Tony's self-image while escalating the stakes for everyone involved. Myha'la's ambitious reporter embodies the ethical ambiguity of witnessing versus exploiting, while Colman Domingo's radio host becomes an unintended confessor for a man spiraling in public. Van Sant exposes how attention itself becomes accelerant, not merely observer.

FORM & TENSION

No Safe Distance

Shot almost entirely handheld, the film denies aesthetic comfort. The camera clings to faces, breath, and jittery movement, reinforcing the sense that control has evaporated. Freeze-frames and period-accurate broadcast textures blur history into folklore, suggesting how quickly trauma becomes narrative. Danny Elfman's score pulses beneath the chaos, never sentimentalizing, always pressing forward. The formal choices mirror the story's thesis: once spectacle begins, detachment becomes impossible.





DARK COMEDY

Absurdity as Exposure

Van Sant allows humor to surface where it should not, and that decision proves essential. Tony's jokes, press conferences, and self-styled heroism are not relief; they are indictment. The laughter catches in the throat, revealing how absurdity thrives in moments of collective unease. The film understands that comedy and catastrophe often share the same oxygen, particularly in a culture trained to confuse attention with justice.

KANDY SAYS

The Wire Still Hums

Dead Man's Wire is not interested in resolving Tony Kirtsis; it is interested in exposing the conditions that made him possible. Van Sant closes not with catharsis, but with an unsettling calm that suggests nothing has been fixed; it's only been deferred. In an era saturated with grievance, broadcast outrage, and performative rebellion, the film feels less like a historical excavation than a warning still vibrating in the present tense. The wire, once taut, has never truly been cut.



MERCY

JUSTICE, UPLOADED



Photo Credits Justin Lubin, Courtesy of Amazon MGM Studio

SYNOPSIS

When the System Decides You Are Guilty

Chris Pratt does not walk into a courtroom in *Mercy*. He is trapped inside one. In this near future, justice has been stripped of personality and upgraded for speed. Pratt plays Detective Chris Raven, a man accused of murdering his wife and handed over to an artificial intelligence built to deliver verdicts without hesitation. No jury. No sympathy. No appeal waiting in the wings. The clock starts at ninety minutes, and the machine does not care how convincing he sounds.

Surveillance footage replaces witnesses. Behavioral modeling replaces motive. Emotional response is logged, analyzed, and quietly dismissed. Every word Raven speaks is compared against a system that believes certainty is morality and efficiency is truth.

The real cruelty is not the accusation. The cruelty is recognition. Raven helped sell this system to the world, convinced it would be cleaner, fairer, and impossible to corrupt. Now he must survive it. What follows is not a legal battle, but a controlled collapse, as a man races against logic that cannot afford to doubt and a future that has already decided doubt is a flaw.

Studio Amazon MGM Studios

Starring Chris Pratt, Rebecca Ferguson, Kali Reis, Annabelle Wallis, Chris Sullivan, Kylie Rogers

PERFORMANCES

Human Fragility Versus Synthetic Authority

Chris Pratt delivers one of the most disciplined performances of his career. Stripped of swagger and sarcasm, his Raven is a man whose confidence erodes in real time. Pratt plays the role inward, allowing fear, guilt, and resolve to surface through restraint rather than explosion. The performance hinges on endurance, not theatrics, and the result is quietly compelling.

Rebecca Ferguson's Judge Maddox is the film's gravitational force. She embodies authority without cruelty, precision without warmth. Her performance is controlled to the point of austerity, making her presence feel absolute rather than aggressive. Ferguson does not play the machine as villainous; she plays it as convinced. That certainty becomes the most unsettling element of the film.

Around Chris Pratt's unraveling detective, Mercy assembles a supporting cast designed to apply pressure rather than relief. Annabelle Wallis enters the story as a presence tied to Raven's past, bringing emotional weight that refuses to be cleanly processed by the system judging him. Her role introduces memory and intimacy into a courtroom that treats both as liabilities rather than context.

Kali Reis delivers a grounded, physical counterpoint, embodying authority shaped by experience rather than abstraction. Her interactions with Raven carry the unspoken understanding that loyalty has limits when careers, credibility, and survival are on the line. She does not argue with the system; she operates within it, making her presence quietly dangerous.

Chris Sullivan adds a destabilizing human variable, playing a figure caught between procedure and conscience. His performance underscores how easily people become components once systems begin optimizing outcomes. Kylie Rogers brings a sharp emotional edge, reminding the audience that innocence does not translate well into data and that vulnerability is often misread as inconsistency.





DIRECTION

Bekmambetov Turns the Screws

Timur Bekmambetov directs *Mercy* like a man who knows exactly when not to flinch. Gone are the fireworks and visual excess that defined his earlier work. In their place is something far more dangerous: control. The film locks itself inside a single judicial chamber and dares the audience to sit still while the walls close in. There is no chaos here, only pressure. Bekmambetov understands that the real threat is not violence, but inevitability. Nothing feels ornamental, and nothing feels accidental. This future does not announce itself with spectacle. It arrives the way real power always does - clean, confident, and already in control.

THEMES

When Fairness Becomes Final

Mercy is not impressed by artificial intelligence, and it does not pretend to be afraid of it either. What unsettles the film is the ideology wrapped

around the machine - the belief that removing ambiguity automatically produces justice. In this world, doubt is not a virtue. It is a defect. Empathy is not balance. It is contamination.

The film's most uncomfortable move is turning that indictment inward. Raven is not a bystander to the system's rise; he is one of its architects. He sold certainty as fairness. He defended efficiency as morality. Now, seated across from the machine he trusted, he is forced to confront what happens when judgment is stripped of hesitation and authority no longer requires understanding.

Mercy does not argue against progress. It questions the appetite for answers that arrive too cleanly and conclusions that close too quickly. When justice refuses contradiction, punishment becomes automatic and reflection becomes irrelevant. The film's challenge is blunt and unapologetic: a system can function perfectly and still be fundamentally wrong.

KANDY SAYS

A Thriller That Refuses Comfort

Mercy rejects spectacle in favor of tension that crawls under the skin. The film thrives on pressure rather than spectacle, using time, confinement, and psychological exposure as its weapons of choice. This is not a future imagined through flying cars or chrome excess, but one shaped by quiet systems that never blink and never forget. The tension comes from watching a man realize that logic, once weaponized, leaves no room for doubt and no space for forgiveness. The film understands that the most frightening futures are not chaotic, but orderly.

Chris Pratt delivers his most restrained performance in years, stripping away bravado in favor of desperation and resolve. Rebecca Ferguson, meanwhile, turns algorithmic authority into something chillingly seductive, embodying a judge who does not need to raise her voice to dominate the room. Together, they create a power dynamic that feels less like a courtroom drama and more like an interrogation conducted by the future itself.

What makes Mercy land is its refusal to soften the blow. It does not reassure the viewer that humanity will always prevail, nor does it pretend that intelligence can be separated from control. The film understands that systems built to be fair often become merciless when they are stripped of context, emotion, and contradiction. This is not a story about technology turning against humanity. It is a story about humanity trusting technology too much.

By confining its drama to a single space and a finite window of time, Mercy forces the viewer to sit with discomfort, uncertainty, and the unsettling calm of a system that believes it is right. The result is a thriller that feels uncomfortably plausible, anchored in a future that already feels within reach.



The image shows a close-up of a person's hand holding a white tablet. On the tablet is the cover of Kandy magazine, which features a blonde woman (Tiffany Selby) in a blue and white checkered bikini top and colorful accessories. The word 'Kandy' is written in a large, stylized purple font at the top of the cover, and 'TIFFANY SELBY' is written in a colorful, blocky font at the bottom. In the top left corner of the overall image, the 'Kandy' logo is displayed in a white, cursive font. The background is a blurred, warm-toned surface.

Kandy®

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